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Historical Postscript

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TWO American magazines, *Life* and *Look*, have begun publication of the memoirs of Arthur M. Schlesinger and Theodore C. Sorensen, two of President Kennedy's close aides (see *New Times*, August 18). So far, they have published the chapters on the Bay of Pigs incident of April 1961. The facts disclosed in them have triggered off a sharp controversy in the press, now joined by the Central Intelligence Agency. These events are part of history, but the Schlesinger and Sorensen accounts deal with some very delicate, and very topical, issues.

There can be no doubt that President Kennedy, the country's Chief Executive, bore full responsibility for the dismal Bay of Pigs gamble. In fact, he admitted as much publicly. But both authors are at pains to distinguish between *political responsibility* for the fiasco, of which they do not absolve the late President, and the *immediate blame*, which they place squarely on the Central Intelligence Agency, top-ranking Pentagon officials and certain members of the Cabinet.

Both memoirists recall Kennedy's remark, after the fiasco: "Victory

has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan."

Mr. Sorensen also remembers how, while walking in the White House garden the same day, Kennedy repeated the phrase and "told me, at times in caustic tones, of some of the other fathers of defeat who had let him down." The President was referring to his top-level advisers, particularly in the Pentagon and the CIA, who "misadvised, misled and misinformed" him, and in the end left him holding the baby.

And both memoirists remind their readers that the preparations for the invasion of Cuba began under President Eisenhower early in 1960. Eisenhower approved the CIA plan for clandestine preparations and training of the Cuban counter-revolutionaries. Kennedy, Mr. Sorensen writes, "inherited the plan, the planners and, most troubling of all, the Cuban exile brigade." Briefed on the operation shortly before he took over office, Kennedy was "astonished at its magnitude and daring. He told me later on that he had great doubts from that moment on."

Both authors name CIA Director Allen Dulles as one of the most ar-

dent of the invasion advocates. He missed no chance of boasting about his ~~successful~~ operation in overthrowing Guatemala's legal government. Mr. Sorensen describes the scene in the Presidential study shortly before the invasion. Allen Dulles told Kennedy:

"I stood right here at Ike's desk and told him I was certain our Guatemalan operation would succeed. And, Mr. President, the prospects for this [Cuba] plan are even better than they were for that one."

There was pressure from all sides. One of the most persuasive and oft-repeated arguments was that the Cuban exile brigade could not be disbanded. If it were, the émigrés would accuse the United States of "having lost its nerve" in the fight against Communism. According to Schlesinger, there was strong pressure from a "collection of officials prepared to sacrifice" the reputation of the young President, "in order to defend interests and pursue objectives of their own."

Be that as it may, Kennedy approved the plan, but stipulated that under no circumstances should American troops have any part in it. This, both authors say, met with no objections from the plan's keenest supporters. They felt sure the operation would succeed without direct American participation.

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